

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 8552

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PO
SUBJECT: ELECTION ASSESSMENT: SOCIALISTS PASS TEST;
COMMUNISTS GAIN

REF: LISBON 8538 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: THE LOCAL ELECTION RESULTS PROVIDE SOMETHING
FOR ALMOST EVERYONE EXCEPT CONSERVATIVES AND THE ULTRA-
LEFT. THE SOCIALISTS HAVE WEATHERED WHAT MANY REGARDED
AS A REFERENDUM ON THEIR MANAGEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT.
THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS HELD THEIR OWN. THE BEST-EVER
COMMUNIST SHOWING WILL REINFORCE THE PCP CALL FOR A POPULAR
FRONT GOVERNMENT AND ENCOURAGE THE PARTY LEADERSHIP
IN ITS UNREGENERATE MOSCOW-LINING WAYS. END SUMMARY.

1. WINNERS AND LOSERS: THE VARIETY OF RESULTS AVAILABLE
FROM THREE SETS OF LOCAL ELECTIONS DEC 12 WILL ENABLE MOST
PARTICIPANTS TO CLAIM A DEGREE OF SUCCESS. WITH
50 PERCENT OF THE VOTE REPORTED, WE SEE IT AS FOLLOWS:
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-- THE SOCIALISTS HAVE REASON TO BE PLEASED. THE RESULTS RE-

CONFIRMED THE PS AS THE LEADING VOTE-GETTER BY A SUBSTANTIAL MARGIN AND THE ONLY PARTY WITH A BALANCED, NATIONWIDE CONSTITUENCY.

- THE COMMUNISTS, UP FROM A DISAPPOINTING SEVEN PERCENT IN THE JUNE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS TO A BEST-EVER TWENTY PERCENT OF THE VOTE, HAVE RECLAIMED THEIR POSITION AS PORTUGAL'S THIRD PARTY. USING A FRONT ORGANIZATION PAID OFF.
- THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS HELD THEIR OWN AND SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED THE NUMBER OF MUNICIPALITIES IN WHICH THEY ARE THE LEADING PARTY.
- THE CENTER DEMOCRATS, ALTHOUGH DROPPING ONLY SLIGHTLY FROM THEIR APRIL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SHOWING, MUST BE DISAPPOINTED. THEY EXPECTED CONSIDERABLY MORE.
- FOR THE FAR-LEFT GDUP, THE RESULTS WERE A DISASTER.

2. WHY IT HAPPENED: THE RESULTS CONFIRMED THE STABILITY OF PORTUGUESE VOTING PATTERNS. THERE WERE NO MAJOR SHIFTS. EVEN THE STRONG COMMUNIST SHOWING WAS MORE OF A RETURN TO THE NORMS OF THE 1975 AND 1976 ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. A NUMBER OF FACTORS WORKED TO INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME.

- STEPPED-UP PS EFFORTS, PARTICULARLY BY THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP, DURING THE LAST WEEK OF THE CAMPAIGN PAID OFF. THE NATIONWIDE PS LOCAL ORGANIZATION HELPED PULL THE PARTY THROUGH.
- ALTHOUGH AIDED BY A HIGH ABSTENTION RATE, THE COMMUNIST "VICTORY" WAS EARNED. THE PARTY WENT ALL OUT; NO EXPENSE WAS SPARED. CUNHAL PASSED THE WORD: THIS WAS A "MUST WIN" FOR THE PCP.
- THE SUPERIOR PSD ORGANIZATION IN THE NORTH ENABLED THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS TO HALT INCURSIONS BY THEIR CENTER DEMOCRATIC RIVALS ON THE RIGHT. THE CDS SIMPLY DID NOT HAVE IT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL.
- THE GDUPS FELL APART EARLY AND WERE NEVER A THREAT.

3. WHAT IT MEANS: THE RESULTS PROVIDE SOMETHING FOR ALMOST EVERYONE EXCEPT THE GDUP AND THE CONSERVATIVES.

- FOR THE SOCIALISTS, THE OUTCOME, WHILE NOT QUITE THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, IN THE GOVERNMENT CLAIMED BY SOARES, WAS STILL IMPRESSIVE. THE SOCIALISTS HAVE WEATHERED WHAT MANY VIEWED AS A REFERENDUM ON THEIR MANAGEMENT OF CONFIDENTIAL

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THE GOVERNMENT. THE RESULTS WILL STRENGTHEN SOARES'S HAND. WHILE CONTINUING TO RESIST PCP OFFERS OF ALLIANCE. SOARES IS STILL IN A POSITION TO CONTINUE THE POLICIES OF HIS ALL SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT, SINCE THE DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION GOT NO MADDAGE. WITH THE STABILITY OF VOTING PATTERNS AGAIN DEMONSTRATED, THE THREAT OF A RESORT TO NEW ELECTIONS BECOMES MORE OF A DANGER TO THE DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION THAN TO THE GOVERNMENT. MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE

THREAT TO THE GOVERNMENT IMPLICIT IN A SIGNIFICANT FALLOFF
IN THE SOCIALIST PERCENTAGE IS REMOVED.

-- MORE OMINOUS IS THE BEST-EVER ELECTION BY THE COMMUNISTS.
CUNHAL MADE GOOD ON HIS BOAST TO COLLECT WITH INTEREST ON
THE DISAPPOINTING PCP PERFORMANCE IN THE JUNE
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. THE RESULTS WILL REINFORCE THE
PCP CALL FOR A POPULAR FRONT GOVERNMENT. IT WILL ALSO
ENCOURAGE THE PARTY LEADERSHIP IN ITS UNREGENERATE MOSCOW-
LING WAYS.

-- FOR THE PSD, THE RESULTS ARE A RELIEF. SA CARNEIRO CAN
POINT TO THE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF MUNICIPAL CHAMBERS
CONTROLLED BY HIS PARTY IN ARGUING FOR AN INCREASED
PSD ROLE IN POLICY-MAKING.

-- FOR THE GDUP, THE RESULTS WERE AN UNMITIGATED
DISASTER. WITHOUT OTELO, THE COMPONENT ULTRA-LEFT
PARTIES DROPPED BACK TO LESS THAN THE THREE PERCENT
THEY WON IN THE APRIL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS.
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